

April 29, 2009 - G.I. Benefits Bill

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Slaughter: VA To Begin Accepting New G.I. Bill Applications on Friday

G.I. Bill for the 21st Century Restores College Scholarships for Iraq and Afghanistan Vets

Washington, DC - Congresswoman Louise M. Slaughter (D-NY-28), Chairwoman of the House Committee on Rules, today announced that beginning this Friday, May 1, 2009 the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) will begin accepting applications for veterans benefits made available by the G.I. Bill for the 21st Century.

The G.I. Bill for the 21st Century - which was strongly supported by Rep. Slaughter and the Democratic Majority in Congress - was enacted on June 30, 2008.

The landmark legislation restored full, four-year college scholarships for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans - on par with the educational benefits available after World War II. The law makes Iraq and Afghanistan veterans part of an American economic recovery, just as the veterans of World War II helped grow and strengthen the American middle class.

"Our brave men and women in uniform have sacrificed much in Iraq and Afghanistan and deserve our gratitude and support when they return home," said Rep. Slaughter. "This new G.I. Bill marks a major step forward in our commitment to ensure that our service men and women receive the quality benefits they deserve. The G.I. Bill for the 21st Century - by providing our veterans with full, four-year college scholarships - will ensure that the heroes of Iraq and Afghanistan are a key part of our nation's economic recovery."

On Friday, May 1, 2009 the VA will begin accepting applications for these benefits. The application is available online. Payment processing will begin on August 1, 2009.

BACKGROUND

Since World War II, our government has offered educational assistance to our veterans when they returned home. The first G.I. bills in 1944 helped veterans readjust to civilian life and afforded them the opportunity of a college education. Out of the 15 million veterans who returned home from World War II, more than half used the G.I. bill's benefits to pursue an education.

Since then, Congress passed several additional G.I. bills to grant educational benefits to veterans returning from the Korean War and the Vietnam War. After the Vietnam War, Congress passed two G.I. bills that established peacetime educational benefits for members of the Armed Services - most recently the Montgomery G.I. Bill of 1985.

Although the Montgomery G.I. Bill provides educational benefits, it was not designed to meet the needs of our current situation in which several hundred thousand men and women in uniform are fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Current G.I. educational benefits pay only about 70 percent of a public college education and 30 percent of a private college education.

Last Congress, Rep. Slaughter proudly joined the Democratic Majority in passing the G.I. Bill for the 21st Century which restores full, four-year scholarships for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans. Following are the key provisions of the new G.I. Bill:

- Increases education benefits for those who have served at least 3 months on active duty since 9/11. Under the bill, increased educational benefits would be available to all members of the military who have served for at least three months on active duty since September 11, 2001, including activated reservists and National Guard.

- Links educational benefits to amount of active duty served since 9/11. Under the G.I. Bill for the 21st Century, those who have served on active-duty for three years or more would qualify for the full educational benefit - i.e., the costs of a four-year education up to the level of the most expensive in-state public school. Those who have served between three months and three years of active duty would qualify for a proportion of that full benefit - e.g., those serving on active duty for at least three months would receive 40 percent of that benefit and those serving on active duty for at least 12 months would receive 60 percent of that benefit. This scale rewards all active service, whether by regular component troops or by National Guard and Reservists.

- Covers up to the cost of the most expensive in-state public school. The G.I. Bill for the 21st Century allows veterans pursuing an approved program of education to receive payments covering the established charges of their program, up to the cost of the most expensive in-state public school - covering 100 percent of tuition, fees and books. The bill also provides a monthly stipend equivalent to housing costs in their area. It would allow additional payments for tutorial assistance, as well as licensure and certification tests.

- Matches voluntary contributions for more expensive schools. The G.I. Bill for the 21st Century also creates a new program in which the government will agree to match, dollar for dollar, any voluntary additional contributions from institutions whose tuition is more expensive than the maximum educational assistance provided under this legislation.

- Provides veterans more time to use educational benefit. The GI Bill for the 21st Century also provides veterans up to 15 years - instead of the current 10 - after they leave active duty to use their education assistance entitlement.

- Fully paid for. The G.I. Bill for the 21st Century is fully paid for by a one-half-of-one-percent surtax on couples who earn more than \$1 million per year.

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